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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003246

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SUBJECT: SUEBU, ATURURI LIKELY WINNERS IN CONTROVERSIAL
PAPUAN ELECTIONS

REF: A. JAKARTA 3160 (PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS LIKELY TO

SEAL PARTITION OF PAPUA)

[1](#)B. 05 JAKARTA 15417 (VICE PRESIDENT KALLA BROKERS
PAPUA SETTLEMENT)

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Classified By: B. Lynn Pascoe, Ambassador. Reason: 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Preliminary results indicate that Barnabas "Bas" Suebu and Alex Hesegem were elected as governor and vice governor of Papua province on Friday, March 10. On the following day, incumbent Abraham Atururi and Rahimin Katjong won in neighboring West Irian Jaya province, prevailing over the controversial Golkar candidate Yorrays Raweyai in an election that many Papuans believe never should have been held. The only reported violence did not take place in West Irian Jaya as some had feared (reftel A paras 9 -10), but rather in a mountainous regency of Papua where residents were angered by the defeat of a local favorite son. The Papuan People's Council (Majles Rakyat Papua, MRP), which had rejected the West Irian Jaya election as consolidating the partition of Papua into the two provinces, is considering next steps, such as legal action. The central government could best defuse the escalating political confrontation by taking credible actions to reaffirm its good faith commitment to full implementation of the Special Autonomy Law. End summary.

Slim Lead For Suebu-Hesegem in Papua

[1](#)2. (SBU) As Monday, March 13, Barnabas "Bas" Suebu and his running mate Alex Hesegem held a slim lead over four other tickets in the March 10 election for governor of Papua province. Although Suebu is a senior member of Golkar, former President Megawati invited him to head the PDI-P ticket in Papua. With 16 of 20 regencies reporting, he holds a slim lead (29-30 percent of the vote counted so far) over Lukas Enembe and Arobi Ahmad "Robby" Aituarauw (28 percent). As long as Suebu's percentage remains above 25 percent, he can avoid a runoff. The Golkar ticket John Ibo-Pascalis Kosay is in third place, with about 23 percent. Two other tickets headed by former deputy governor Konstan Karma and Q Henk Wabiser, a former admiral, trailed in fourth and fifth place.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In the only reported instance of violence in either Papua or West Irian Jaya, supporters of local favorite son Enembe trashed an electoral office in Mulia, Puncak Jaya regency, because they were unhappy with the results of the

electoral count. No arrests were made, according to media reports. We expect a final result later this week. If Suebu maintains his lead, he will be sworn in next month.

14. (SBU) The race in Papua province was observed by the domestic monitoring NGO JPPR, which reported that it found problems with voter lists but no instances of wholesale fraud. JPPR attributed the problems it found to sloppiness and inefficiency.

Clash Averted in West Irian Jaya

15. (C) Despite predictions of conflict and boycotts of the March 11 election in West Irian Jaya (reftel A), polling appears to have been peaceful. There is moreover no indication that voters heeded calls to boycott the vote, suggesting that the MRP's protests did not fall on fertile ground in West Irian Jaya. Interim results vary but all show Abraham "Bram" Atururi, who with his deputy Rahimin Katjong ran on the PDI-P ticket, with a wide lead over his Golkar opponents, DPD member Yorrays Raweyai and Abdul Killian. One interim result gives Atururi 62 percent of the vote. Another ticket composed of Decky Asmuruf and Ali Kastella trails in a distant third place.

16. (C) Despite having been required to having step down last summer in favor of a civil servant caretaker governor, Atururi seems to have benefited from his previous incumbency and the loyalty of the large Arfak ethnic group in the Manokwari area. In a conversation with poloff before stepping down last April, Atururi had confidently predicted his reelection, noting that he had political backing in Sorong as a result of a previous tenure there as regent, and had built a new base of support in Manokwari. Atururi himself calculated that these bases, comprising the majority of West Irian Jaya's population, would deliver roughly sixty

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percent of the vote.

17. (SBU) The West Irian Jaya race was also closely watched because of the controversial presence of Yorrays, head of a thuggish political militia in the last years of the Suharto era. Yorrays has said that he will appeal the election results because many voters in Sorong and Fak-fak did not receive voter ID cards in time. Despite these claims, leaders of his Yorrays' own party in Sorong have called Atururi the winner, and the monitoring group JPPR has said that is has not yet received reports of any major irregularities.

MRP Contemplating Next Steps

18. (C) As reported reftel A, the Papuan People's Assembly (Majles Rakyat Papua, MRP), believed that the West Irian Jaya elections should not have been held until a new legal basis was agreed for the existence of the province. This is a view shared by elites in Papua province as well. In a March 13 discussion with poloff, Pastor Phil Erari addressed the issue in more detail. Erari is an associate of Bas Suebu, who appears set to become Papua's next governor, and is also close to MRP Chairman Agus Alua. He said that Vice President Kalla had reneged on his November deal (reftel B) on a comprehensive settlement to the Papua question, and that the MRP believed it had grounds for legal action. Erari said that the MRP interprets paragraph 73 of the implementing regulation for the Special Autonomy Law as requiring its input on the status of West Irian Jaya. By ignoring this and holding direct elections, the central government has violated the Special Autonomy Law, Erari argued.

19. (C) Kalla publicly stated last Friday that he does not regard the Special Autonomy as applicable in West Irian Jaya, a position with puts him at even greater odds with the MRP.

Erari said that the question now being argued among the MRP, the government of Papua province, and various indigenous groups is whether to continue to accept Special Autonomy as the basis for dialogue with the central government. Erari said that Suebu and the MRP are committed to salvaging it, while more radical groups want to formally repudiate it and hold a referendum on the future of Papua's relationship with the central government. This is a step that the central government would consider provocative at best and outright separatism at worst.

Comment

¶10. (C) While we welcome the fact that there was no real violence in connection with last weekend's elections, it is clear that relations between the central government, on the one hand, and the MRP and Papuan political elites on the other, are rapidly eroding. This is not necessarily the death knell for the Special Autonomy law, since its most important political institution, the MRP, and its revenue-sharing provisions are still in place. With British Petroleum's new Tangguh liquefied natural gas project located in West Irian Jaya, the financial stakes of the status of the province are high, since the operation will eventually become an important contributor to Special Autonomy revenues. For the situation to improve, the central government must somehow reaffirm its commitment to Special Autonomy, preferably by fulfilling its promise to issue a new legal regulation on the status of West Irian Jaya, drawing on input from the MRP and the provincial government of Papua as plainly stipulated under the Special Autonomy Law.

PASCOE